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ABSTRACT

This program was developed to help students address how they can create solutions to persistent problems in their residence halls and on campus. Too often diversity programs are inwardly-focused and far removed from practical action that could increase understanding and reduce conflict. This program seeks to combine self-reflection with active problem solving to enhance learning and move closer to the goal of campus unity. Specifically, the goals of this program are as follows: (1) allow a forum to talk about diversity in order to share enjoyment in and encourage pride of one's own unique characteristics, as well as to educate others about issues and concerns with which they may not be familiar; (2) place responsibility in the hands of the students for seeking, establishing, and encouraging campus unity; (3) shift focus from authorities teaching youth about diversity issues to providing a sharing among equals for participants' individual interest and personal growth. (Author/LSR)

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Appreciating Others: A Program on Diversity and Tolerance

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This program was developed to help students specifically address how they can create solutions to age-old problems in their residence halls and on campus. Too often diversity programs are inwardly-focused and too far removed from practical action that can increase understanding and reduce conflict. This program seeks to combine self-reflection with active problem-solving to enhance learning and move closer to the goal of campus unity.

Goals:

1. Allow a forum to talk about diversity in order to share enjoyment in and encourage pride of one's own unique characteristics, as well as to educate others about issues and concerns with which they may not be familiar.

2. Place responsibility in the hands of the students for seeking, establishing, and encouraging campus unity.

3. Shift the focus from authorities teaching "ignorant youth" about diversity issues (which automatically instills resistance) to providing a sharing among equals for participants' individual interest and personal growth.

Set Up:

1. Groups of 8-10 (can be enlarged to 12-15, if necessary) can be established prior to the workshop with the aim of establishing diverse membership. If this is not possible, groups can be created after participants arrive for the program.

2. Each group should be facilitated by a member of the faculty or staff who has been trained in diversity education.

3. Chairs should be placed in a circle in a room large enough to accommodate all small groups, due to necessity of large group sharing.

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4. Invitations can be mailed to each student, describing the event and inviting them to meet and appreciate the diversity and uniqueness of each of the members of their small group, who would then be listed in order to begin to personalize the activity. This can enhance participation rates, particularly if they happen to meet one or more of these people prior to the event. Students will be offered the option to either bring an item, food, song, or dance that represents their cultural or ethnic heritage or to share a family tradition that they believe stems from their cultural or ethnic heritage.

Program Outline:

1. Program Introduction

Introduce facilitators; review goals of workshop; set ground rules about confidentiality, mutual respect, using our best listening skills; establish a time schedule for upcoming activities; conduct introductory exercise of all participants.

Optional Activity for Participant Introductions

Pass out 3x5 cards. Tell participants not to write their name on the card. Have them respond to two questions:

1) Something I'm looking forward to in this workshop is...
2) One concern I have about attending this workshop is...

Facilitator collects all cards, shuffles them, explains that participants will be introducing themselves and then reading someone else's card, so that no one will know who wrote the responses. Explain that they may get their own card, but that no one will know that.

2. Icebreaker Activity: "Identifiers"

Have students move to various parts of the room (or stand up/sit down) based on their status on a variety of identifiers, such as year at the college, first borns/middle/youngest, area of country they're from, type of music they listen to, whether they speak more than one language, etcetera. End with "those who have a belly button" to demonstrate common denominator.

Process with the group the myriad of ways in which we're different, but that we also have things in common. And as seen in this exercise, we often cannot see the commonalities; we must get to know someone first.

3. Round Robin Sharing

Participants should break down into small groups at this time.

Facilitator of small group explains that participants will be responding to four questions in round robin style, but that they always have the option to pass if they are not comfortable sharing.

The facilitator always begins the process in order to model the type of response that would foster appreciation of diversity.

Questions:

1) Share a family tradition that you believe stems from your ethnic heritage or share something tangible, like an item, food, song, dance (students can be told about this option when they receive their invitation to the program).

2) Share something you are proud of about your cultural group/ethnic heritage or any other identifying group (such as gender, sexual orientation, religion, etcetera).

3) Share a "stereotype buster" relating to your ethnic/racial group or any other group that is part of your identity (something you feel is an inaccurate portrayal).

4) Share how you typically respond when someone steps on your "cultural toes."

After each round robin, a facilitator may ask the small groups to share a few highlights with the large group. Or each small group can work independently and then share any highlights from all four questions with the large group.

4. Brainstorming Solutions

A. In small groups, brainstorm things the students can do in the residence halls, in the commuter lodge, or in classes to enhance unity and appreciate differences.

Facilitator writes ideas on newsprint. Small group decides which ones to share with large group.

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B. In small groups, brainstorm things the students can do on an individual level to appreciate and understand individual differences, including what to do if you don't understand someone or feel you've been misunderstood.

Facilitator writes ideas on newsprint. Small group decides which ones to share with large group.

* Can incorporate practice role plays for handling difficult situations here, if desired.

5. Appreciating Others

In small groups, ask members to choose one person in their small group who has impacted them today and have them tell the person why.

Facilitators appreciate all members for their honesty, taking risks, and investing themselves in striving for the goal of unity at the college.

6. Closing

Facilitators summarize highlights, thank participants, challenge students to continue their investigation of and fascination with other cultures and their appreciation of others' uniqueness.

Describe follow up activity and encourage them to put ideas they brainstormed into action.

7. Evaluate

Evaluate program with standardized form. Could exchange completed evaluation for raffle ticket and give away some prize relating to diversity.

8. Follow up Activity

One month later, reconvene in a social semi-structured format to discuss how the brainstormed ideas were being implemented, any difficulties in doing so, and/or outcomes of such attempts.

*** Special Activity: For Closing or Follow Up**

Allow students to decorate a diversity t-shirt. Materials needed: white t-shirts with outlines of gingerbread men that can be filled in, fabric markers, tablecloths to keep markers from damaging table surfaces.